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*IN TWO VOLUMES.*

VOL. II.

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THIS TALE INCLUDES A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTIES OF ENGLAND IN FORMER TIMES; AND INTENDED AS A CONTRAST TO THEIR FLOURISHING CONDITION AT THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

# EDWARD DE COURCY.

## CHAP. IX.

FORTUNATELY for the fugitives, they found in this port a veſſel bound for the French coaſt, and which only waited for a favourable wind, in order to weigh anchor. In this interval for ſeaſonable refreſhment and repoſe, the faithful lovers experienced the pu-

reſt happineſs in the proſpect of connubial bliſs, which now lay immediately before them. The reflection on their long and painful ſeparation, conduced to exalt the joy of the preſent moment; and while they every hour renewed their vows of conſtancy, their boſoms glowed with tranſports of gratitude for the attainment of a felicity, which deſpondency had concealed from the view of both. The Earl evinced a mind animated by the ſublimeſt ſatisfactions, and the deepeſt conviction of De Courcy's ſingular fidelity and worth—he even ſeemed to look back without regret, on the ſplendor

dor of his former condition, diſcovering impatience to ſhare the humble tranquillity which he was told preſided in the obſcure habitation of the Duke of Norfolk, and from whoſe noble contempt of worldly honours, he propoſed to derive a practical leſſon to himſelf—but he was deſtitute of the genuine root of virtue and peace, which radically lodged in the boſom of that noble exile, namely, an honeſt heart.

Who ſhall pretend to fathom thoſe depths of wickedneſs, which ſometimes lie hid in the human mind, or comprehend the ingenuity

with which it imitates the moſt diabolical exploits.

The ſhip in which the little party was to ſail, ſtill waited for a favourable wind; and whilſt the lovers beguiled that tedious interval, by the endearments of virtuous affection, the Earl emancipated from his recent apprehenſions, had leiſure to ruminate on the condition of life which awaited him in the Duke's humble aſylum. That picture of ſerenity and ſocial happineſs which De Courcy had drawn, began by degrees to appear flat and inſipid—his heart panted after the ſplendour of a court,

court, the glare of rank, and the opportunity of accumulating riches. To quit England in order to ſhare the precarious fortunes of an exile, appeared to him a meaſure, which annihilated the poſſibility of retrieving paſt misfortunes, and ill calculated to ſatisfy the towering ambition which gradually revived in his mind. Indulging in frequent meditations of this kind, he recollected the animoſity which formerly ſubſiſted between the Duke of Norfolk and the Prince then on the Britiſh throne, 'till at length it became apparent to his ſelfiſh views, that the giving up any branch of that family to the

power of a potent enemy, would infallibly open to him the way to the favour and reward of the new King.

But now favoured by the winds, the ſhip was getting under ſail, and the happy lovers waited only for the Earl to embark with them, for a country where ſafety and felicity awaited. He returned, but with a countenance of unauſpicious gloom—cloſe at his ſteps followed a band of men in arms, and ſuddenly laying hold of De Courcy, he cried, "I arreſt thee as a falſe traitor to our rightful Sovereign, Henry the Fourth."

Aſtoniſh-

Aſtoniſhment ſeized the trembling victim, but with the calmneſs of conſcious innocence, he demanded the cauſe of ſo unjuſt a conduct; to which the Earl replied, only by giving orders that he ſhould be inſtantly taken into ſafe cuſtody.

Vain were the tears and pathetic entreaties of the tender and affrighted Ethelinde—a father deaf to the voice of nature as of juſtice, forced her from her lover's arms, who without knowing of what crime he was accuſed, was torn from her preſence, and hurried to impriſonment.

From that moment he was ignorant of the fate of her he loved more than exiſtence; nor did he again ſee the perfidious Earl, 'till brought in chains to the capital, to learn the iſſue of his ſevere deſtiny: mean time he perplexed himſelf in vain, to ſuggeſt the reaſons of treatment equally unjuſt and violent.

At the expiration of three days, he was brought into the preſence of the reigning Sovereign, who ſeated on a chair of ſtate, with ſeveral of the nobility around him, gave orders that the accuſer ſhould appear, to ſubſtantiate his charge againſt

againſt the priſoner—immediately Earl Belmont advanced, and bending one knee, in fawning reverence, thus addreſſed the King.

"Moſt honoured and dread liege; the love and duty which I bear your royal perſon, as the deliverer of our oppreſſed country, and our moſt rightful king, I have cauſed to be apprehended, and brought before your ſovereign preſence, a foul traitor, whom I have detected, wandering in diſguiſe, and ſeeking, by many ſeditious words, to inflame the minds of your good and faithful ſubjects. Now feeling in my own breaſt the pureſt

pureſt zeal for the ſafety and proſperity of my ſovereign's royal perſon and government, I have hither brought this agent of ſedition, by name De Courcy—by blood nearly allied to Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, by whoſe machinations he doubtleſs has returned to England, for the baſe purpoſe of ſubverting the bleſſings we enjoy under your Majeſty's auſpicious reign, and I do moſt humbly beſeech, that this my bounden duty may be accepted in all good part."

The King hearing the name of the Duke, who he imagined to be

inſpired

inſpired with implacable animoſity againſt him, was eaſily induced to credit the accuſation, which had at leaſt a conſiderable degree of probability to ſupport it—he concluded that the Duke of Norfolk, whom he had formerly made a perſonal enemy, could not be well affected to his ſucceſs in obtaining the Britiſh crown, and conſequently the priſoners relation to that nobleman, afforded a ſtrong preſumptive proof of his guilt. Without farther deliberation, the unhappy youth was conſigned to a dungeon in the Tower, while his ungrateful accuſer, ſuſceptible only of the impulſes of ſelfiſhneſs and

and ambition, ſaw him led forth to the execution of the royal ſentence with perfect indifference. As the officers of juſtice conducted the innocent victim from the preſence, he caſt on the Earl a glance, which for a moment pierced his guilty ſoul—but the ſenſation was tranſient, and ſoon gave way to thoſe flattering hopes which now opened to his view.

King Henry, well acquainted with the character of Earl Belmont, beheld his preſent conciliatory demeanour with ſurpriſe, but he was a prince of too much diſcernment, to value thoſe flattering profeſſions

profeſſions ſo highly as the Earl imagined—however, the nature of his ſucceſſion rendered it expedient for him to improve every opportunity of ſtrengthening himſelf on the throne, and therefore he received Earl Belmont with all the cordiality which ſo ambitious a mind could deſire, whilſt he, regardleſs of the means by which ſuch favour had been attained, gloried in the ſucceſs of his perfidy, deeming himſelf fortunate in compaſſing the aim of his wiſhes, by a ſacrifice of ſo little value as that of an obſcure exile. He now became a conſtant attendant at court, offering the ſame incenſe of

flattery

flattery to the preſent Monarch, as formerly he had done to his unfortunate predeceſſor, and expecting alſo the ſame profuſion of reward.

Mean time, while vice and treachery triumphed in the ſmiles of courtly magnificence, the injured and guiltleſs De Courcy languiſhed in a dungeon, excluded from the light and air of heaven; and that which added poignancy to his ſufferings, was the reflection that they were inflicted by the man who owed him both liberty and life; but conſcious innocence, and native magnanimity of ſoul, ſuſpended the weight of adverſity,

that

that it preſſed not with deſtructive force on his devoted head—he imbibed alſo patience and ſubmiſſion from the conſideration, that in that houſe of miſery there were ſome more wretched than himſelf. Not far from the cell in which he was confined, was the gloomy abode of the man who once ſwayed the Britiſh ſceptre—the unfortunate Richard, who heretofore ſaw obſequious crowds attending on his nod. "Such (cried he) is the viciſſitude of ſublunary enjoyments—to day a bed of luxury—a crown—to-morrow the cold dungeon, and even a wholeſome whiſp of ſtraw reluctantly afford-

ed."

ed." Sometimes he heard the groans of that unhappy prince, reſounding through the dreary paſſages, when forgetful of his own, he wept over the wretchedneſs of fallen majeſty. With his uncle the Duke, he was diſpoſed to aſcribe the errors of Richard to the pernicious effects of evil council, and the ſervile arts of baſe ſycophants, and to conſider the condition of royalty as much more intitled to the pity, than the envy of mankind.

"Unhappy (ſaid he) are the few, whom fortune elevates to this pinnacle of greatneſs—do they not of neceſſity come forth on the theatre

theatre of action, with minds perverted by the errors and prejudices of a peculiar education, and find crowds of ſervile dependants ready to cheriſh the enkindling paſſions, and ſtifle the voice of reaſon and of truth, leſt the victim of their baſe arts ſhould awaken from the deluſion, in which the ſpells of flattery have bound his intellectual powers. Thus, too often are the fineſt underſtandings debaſed, and the pureſt minds corrupted, and ſtill the fruits are expected, though the tree of virtue is cut down at its very baſe. Princes will be wiſe and good, when courtiers ſhall become honeſt men."

## CHAP. X.

EDWARD De Courcy languiſhing in a priſon unpitied and unknown, and deprived of every means of communication with mankind, was now an object of the tendereſt ſolicitude to his friends in Italy, to whom no tidings reſpecting him could arrive, and at length they were compelled to admit the diſtreſſing concluſion, that he

he had periſhed amidſt the inteſtine commotions of his native country. That reflection preyed heavily on the Duke of Norfolk, already borne down by the weight of his ſorrows for the miſeries of England. His health had long declined, and the fate of his dear nephew gave the finiſhing ſtroke to his ſufferings.

Perceiving that he had not long to live, he with much compoſure ſummoned his little family around him, and gave to each his parting benediction and council.

"I leave to you (ſaid he to his ſervants) no coſtly legacy to remind you of my good will. Indigence and integrity are all that I can call my own—yet I truſt, my friends, I ſhall live in your remembrances, as in my laſt hours I deſire to bear teſtimony to your affection and fidelity."

He then ſeverally recommended them to the protection of the Count Bologna, adding, with a ſmile, "Theſe, my Lord, are no Heliotropes—no followers of a ſun-beam, but will ſtand by their Lord, though poverty and diſgrace aſſail them."

Then

Then turning to Philippa, who knelt weeping by his bedſide, he preſſed her hand to his boſom, but words were denied him.

The Count diſcerned the feelings of his ſoul at that intereſting moment, and in order to compoſe his paternal apprehenſions, on account of the amiable maiden, who was ſoon to become a friendleſs fugitive in a foreign land, he earneſtly entreated that the marriage ceremony might impart to him the ſacred right of being her protector, to which the Duke aſſenting, with a look of ineffable ſatisfaction, the fair Philippa was privately united

to the man of her choice, in the preſence of the Duke, who raiſing himſelf on his pillow, as ſoon as the holy rites were ended, pronounced a fervent prayer for their nuptial felicity, declaring, that his boſom was now lightened of one half of his anxiety; "there is (continued he) but one care more to attach me to this poor ball—could I be aſſured of De Courcy's fate."

Here his emotion became extremely violent, but at length gradually ſubſided into entire reſignation to the Supreme will. He diſcourſed for ſome time on the af-

fairs of England, (the ſubject which inceſſantly employed his thoughts) and pathetically lamented the miſeries which were impending over that unhappy country, which he was perſuaded would be of long continuance, and comprehended many civil conteſts, and vaſt effuſion of Britiſh blood, before the political differences of that nation would be compoſed. A ſhort time however before his diſſolution, the deep fixed traces of melancholy diſappeared from his countenance, and the ſweet beams of new born felicity glowed in his cloſing eyes.

"I am ſatisfied, my friends, (cried he) for I have ſeen the ſalvation of my country—a ſupernatural impulſe acts on my buſy mind, and urges me forward into the regions of futurity. Long have I gazed with horror on the diſordered aſpect of the moral world—I have contemplated the maſs of mankind, galled by the chains of ſlavery, and the native dignity of the human ſoul obſcured by ignorance and oppreſſion—I have ſeen the rulers of the earth forgetting themſelves to be men, and aſpiring to be eſteemed as ſomething more than mortal, in the indulgence of pride, and the

luſt

luſt of power, trampling their ſpecies under their feet. But I turn from the gloomy picture, to expatiate in viſions of a brighter kind, for even now my ardent ſoul beholds the day, when the breath of renovation ſhall go forth, and the deſolated globe become renewed in beauty. Britons, who already feel the enkindling ſpark of liberty, ſhall be free—they ſhall attain the illuſtrious end of all their dear bought labours, and enjoy a conſtitution, which ſurrounding nations will behold with envy. But alas, the glorious prize ſhall not be obtained, 'till every quarter of the iſle has drank the blood of her

her patriot ſons. At length a race of Kings ſhall ariſe, called in thoſe happy days the *Line of Brunſwick*, under whoſe auſpicious ſway, Britain ſhall behold her ſacred rights ſecured, by a conſtitution in which the rights of prince and ſubject ſhall be nicely poized with equity and wiſdom—then tyranny ſhall ſleep, and loyalty ſupport the reſplendent throne. The king ſhall reign in the hearts of a free people, diffeminating happineſs through all orders of the ſtate—his right hand ſhall embrace the intereſts of his people, and his left uphold their commerce, which then from every corner of the earth ſhall draw the

wealth

wealth of nations. Oh England, favoured of heaven, mayeſt thou be duly ſenſible of thy ineſtimable bleſſings, and vigilantly guard that conſtitution, which ſecures freedom, wealth and happineſs."

With this prophetic apoſtrophe, the Duke ſunk on his pillow, and with a ſmile of tranſport, gently reſigned his patriot ſoul, while even in death his countenance ſeemed animated by the bright views which had dawned on his departing hour.

He was buried with all the honours becoming his rank and merit,

merit, and the munificence of the Count, who bedewed his hearſe with tears of filial ſorrow.

Philippa, now the wife of that amiable young nobleman, was long inconſolable, nor could the endearments of conjugal affection, alleviate her grief for the loſs of a benefactor, in whom the characters both of father and friend had eminently combined.

Several months had now elapſed, ſince De Courcy was made the hapleſs victim of duplicity and ambition, but at length vengeance overtook the perfidious author of his

his ſufferings, whom the wiſe and good had long deemed unworthy to exhale the breath of life. The ſufferings of the unfortunate King Richard began at length to work on the ſenſibility of the Engliſh, in proportion as popular reſentment had time to ſubſide. The indignities daily offered their degraded monarch, and the actual miſeries he was made to undergo, affected a ſenſible change in the public ſentiment. Under the influence of a generous ſympathy, the errors of the prince were forgotten in the ſufferings of the man, and ſeveral inſurrections were made in his favour, by ſome who really

really loved his perſon, or pitied his misfortunes.

Earl Belmont had continued for ſome time a conſtant attendant at the court of Henry the Fourth, from whom he received ſuch flattering notice, as ſuited the politic mind of that King; but this was far from being adequate to the views of Earl Belmont, who thirſted for the lucrative emoluments of office, even more than for the ſmiles of royalty. Diſappointed therefore in theſe expectations, and totally deſtitute of real attachment to the prince, whoſe favour he had zealouſly courted, he determined

to

to avail himſelf of the ebbing tide of popular opinion, and to make one laſt and daring effort for the retrieving his ruined fortune, by heading an inſurrection in favour of the impriſoned Monarch; for provided his own ſelfiſh ends could be accompliſhed, it was matter of entire indifference to him, whether Henry of Lancaſter, or Richard ſat on the throne. But the power and abilities of the new King eaſily ſuppreſſed thoſe commotions, which ſerved in the end to precipitate the fate of Richard, who at length met the end of his miſeries by the aſſaſſin's hand, and atoned for his former errors and miſcon-

miſconduct with his blood, for he was baſely murdered in the houſe of his priſon.

In one of thoſe ill concerted plots which ultimately deſtroyed the prince they were intended to favour, fell Earl Belmont—he was taken in arms, and convicted of ſedition—he was beheaded on the Tower-green, almoſt within ſight of the man, whom he had ſome months before baſely ſacrificed to the purpoſes of avarice and ambition.

CHAP.

## CHAP. XI.

A FEW moments before the fatal axe had closed the eyes of the perfidious Earl in perpetual night, he sought some alleviation of the horrors of black despair, by making a confession of his guilt, respecting the innocent De Courcy. He bore the amplest testimony to the rectitude of his intentions, whilst in language, bordering on blasphemy, he imprecated the

wrath of heaven on his own head, for the enormous wickedneſs of his conduct towards that injured youth. But though he had conjured thoſe who attended him in his laſt moments, to lay his confeſſion before the King, a conſiderable time was ſuffered to elapſe, before any thing was done towards liberating the unjuſtly accuſed priſoner. The pleaſures, or more important avocations of royalty, allowed no room for reflections on the wrongs of an obſcure individual—but at length orders were ſent to the Tower, for the emancipation of the ſufferer, on the

the expreſs condition of his quitting the kingdom immediately.

De Courcy heard the ſentence of enlargement with liſtleſs apathy; he had become inured to the gloom of a dungeon, and the ſmall hopes which remained to him of poſſeſſing the charming miſtreſs of his ſoul, rendered even the idea of liberty irkſome. After ſome little reflection, however, the long depreſſed energy of his mind began to revive, and he determined to employ the liberty which was reſtored to him, in ſeeking his beloved Ethelinde, although, in ſo doing, he muſt break the condi-

tion of his freedom, and expoſe himſelf to impending deſtruction.

Inſenſible to joy, and muſing on the formidable obſtacles which oppoſed his reſearches after the only object which could adminiſter delight to his ſoul, De Courcy was penſively purſuing his way, though undetermined whither, when he heard the plaintive accents of a female, in piteous lamentation. The ſound of woe ſtruck the ſympathetic chord of his feelings, and he ſtop'd to recognize the mourner. Within a ſmall incloſure on one ſide the road, he diſcovered a young woman ſcattering herbs and flowers

flowers on a new made grave. Her face, though faded with grief, was yet beautiful, and her mien was that of unſtudied grace. Tears plenteouſly ſtreamed from her eyes, but ſhe wiped them away with her looſe and flowing hair. At the ſame moment a blaſt of wind diſturbed the buſhes, on which ſhe ſtarted, and looking with wild diſorder around, cried,

"Who are you that would diſturb my ſleeping love—are you the Lord of Colerton, and have you ſtill the arrow which pierced my William's heart—but ſee, I

have got the herb of grace * to ſtanch the blood—he will be well by the time when the cuckoo ſings, and then we will dance o'er the meads—away! away! away!"

She then, with a diſtracted air, flew ſwiftly, and concealed herſelf in a neighbouring copice.

"Alas, poor Agatha," exclaimed a voice of pity. On looking round, De Courcy perceived a fellow travellor, who alſo had been contemplating the ſcene of woe.

* The ancient name for rue.

"Juſt

"Juſt heaven, (purſued the ſtranger, elevating his hands and eyes) wilt thou not look with compaſſion on the diſorders of thy rational creation?—are not theſe children of miſery thine?—is not the poor vaſſal ſuſceptible of the feelings of humanity, equally with his lord?—how long then wilt thou permit the tyrants of mankind to exerciſe oppreſſion?—how long ſhall both the bodies and ſouls of thy creatures be ſubjected to the iron yoke of civil and eccleſiaſtical deſpotiſm?"

"It ſeems (ſaid Edward, modeſtly approaching) that you are

no ſtranger to the intereſting object we have juſt now beheld."

"I know her ſtory, (anſwered he) and as we proceed, will relate it. Know then, oh thou whoſe heart is not ſteel'd to the ſufferings of thy ſpecies, that the damſel we have now ſeen, mourns with the keenneſs of deranged reaſon, a murdered huſband, buried beneath that ſod. Look to the right hand—there riſe the proud turrets of Colerton Caſtle, the owner of which is Lord of more lands than lie between our eyes and the bounding horizon, on which exiſt ten thouſand human beings,

beings, doomed to depend on him for the privilege of inhaling the common air of heaven — their lives, their labours, and all they procure from their natal ſoil, belong to the ariſtocratic deſpot— they can neither marry, or change their abode, nor exerciſe the arts of ſocial life, without his permiſſion. But why ſhould I waſte the time in deſcribing the condition of villainage, or the cruel nature of feudal tenures, ſince already they are too generally underſtood, and the maſs of mankind have forgotten their native dignity in tame obedience to the crafty tenents impoſed by tyrants.

" Of

" Of the number of thoſe wretched beings, was a youth of the name of William, who became the property of Lord Colerton, he having made purchaſe of ſome lands, on which the progenitors of this young man had exiſted, transferable at pleaſure of their maſters, like the vegetables of the ſoil.

" William, though ſcarcely conſcious of the moral powers of man, was yet ſuſceptible of love. Agatha, a neighbouring peaſant, had inſpired his boſom with the tendereſt affection, and ſhe in return diſtinguiſhed him above all the

the other vaſſals—if he ploughed the glebe, ſhe was at his ſide to cheer his labours with her artleſs ſong; and when, for the ſubſiſtence of her aged parents, ſhe gleaned the harveſt field, he failed not to drop the full ears from his hand. Thus an innocent and mutual attachment was formed, and conjugal tenderneſs ſeemed at hand to alleviate the wretchedneſs of their condition. But while their future proſpects were animated with this pleaſing hope, William became the property of another maſter, and their ſeparation was inevitable. It was in vain that they threw themſelves at the feet

of

of their lord, confeſſed their mutual affection, and entreated death, rather than ſeparation;—who ever yet made allowance for a vaſſal's feelings? The lovers were parted—but not long—they formed the deſperate reſolution of eſcaping from bondage, and flying privately together, hoped at once to ſecure liberty, and the enjoyment of love—they were joined in holy wedlock, and the fugitives were happy.

"But the golden dream was deſtined to be of ſhort duration—they were diſcovered and brought in bonds before the lord of Colerton.

ton. Agatha, indeed, was not his property, but the more effectually to revenge the crime of William, in marrying without permiſſion, he eaſily got her into his power; by his orders they were both cruelly ſcourged, and then cloſely confined in ſeparate dungeons of the caſtle.

But while the unhappy huſband was decreed to undergo the worſt which malice could inflict, the charms of Agatha had inſpired the tyrant with ſome kindly relentings for her fate. He ordered her to be taken from the dungeon, and brought before him, when inflated with

with rage and luſt, he thus addreſſed her:

"The wretch thy huſband, who has ſo audaciouſly rebelled againſt me, ſuffers by famine the puniſhment his tranſgreſſion merits—but towards thee my boſom inclines to mercy—repent thee of thy crime, and thou ſhalt live;—give me thy love, Agatha."

"Never, (replied ſhe, with honeſt indignation) never, my lord, ſhall the heart of Agatha admit a rival to her William—releaſe him who hath committed no crime, and I will prove my gratitude by

humble and unceaſing diligence; but when I prove falſe to William, may tortures rack theſe limbs, and vultures tear my faithleſs heart."

To this declaration the Lord of Colerton returned a ghaſtly ſmile.

"'Tis well, (ſaid he) and I admire thy conſtancy, and to reward it, thy huſband ſhall be releaſed; nay, thy own hand ſhall unlock the door of his dungeon, and lead him out to receive the conſummation of love—my vaſſals ſhall be aſſembled to witneſs how amply I can pardon thoſe, who have preſumed to deſpiſe my authority;—

go,

go, releaſe thy William, and attend me together in the morning, when I mean publickly to cancel the offence, and compleat your bliſs."

Tranſported at the clemency of her lord, Agatha would have fallen at his feet, to utter the effuſions of her thankful heart; but he bade her haſten to releaſe her huſband, nor did ſhe wait for a ſecond command, but ruſhing into the dungeon where William lay chained to the damp earth, and nearly exhauſted for want of food, ſhe recalled him to life by relating the unexpected mercy. Tranſports, too great for utterance, long kept them

them both ſilent—at length they left the horrid cell, and paſſed much of the ſucceeding time in praying for bleſſings on their humane maſter.

When the morning arrived, they both arrayed themſelves in the gayeſt habits they poſſeſſed, and William, as a ſort of bridal ornament, adorned the flowing hair of Agatha with a garland he had formed on purpoſe, of the freſheſt flowers—then, hand in hand, they proceeded with joyous looks to the green, which, on every ſide, was filled with vaſſals, regularly diſpoſed in even ranks, ſo as to be

ſpectators of the ceremony which was about to follow.

" The Lord of Colerton appeared, and ordered the faithful pair to approach him — then addreſſing himſelf to the aſſembly, thus ſpoke."

" You are here met to witneſs the manner of my procedure towards thoſe, who once dared to make light of the ſubmiſſion and reſpect they owe me—you already know the crime—behold alſo the puniſhment."

" With

" With theſe words, the tyrant ſeized a croſs bow, and nerved with fury, darted an arrow at William's breaſt. Agatha in vain lifted up her arm to divert the fatal weapon—it pierced his heart, and he fell weltering in gore.

" Yonder is the earth which covers the ſlaughtered victim of feudal tyranny, and hither the wretched Agatha, deprived of reaſon, comes nightly to pour the wild notes of woe, nor quits her William's grave, 'till the buſy day diſturbs her ſacred ſorrows."

Here the traveller ended his narrative, and De Courcy, with tears of pity ſtreaming from his eyes, exclaimed,

"Wherefore was man created? and to whom is exiſtence a bleſſing? I ſee a few individuals endowed with the privilege of imitating the turpitude of the apoſtate race, while millions of men are condemned to ſink beneath the exceſs of their crimes. Tell me, oh ſtranger, wherefore was man created?"

"Think not (he replied) that ſuch was the original order of things. Much

Much is amiſs in the conſtitution of the moral world, but let it be remembered, that it was not always thus. With reſpect to the feudal ſyſtem, the wretched effects of which you have in one inſtance, now heard cauſe to deplore. I conceive its origin can be traced no higher than the period when ſuch vaſt hordes of barbarians overran and deſolated the weſtern empire of Rome. A new diviſion of property gradually introduced a ſpecies of government, before unknown. The king, or general, who led thoſe barbarians to conqueſt, parcelled out the lands of the vanquiſhed, among his chief

officers, on the condition of obliging a number of men to follow his ſtandard. Thoſe chiefs, in ſubdividing the lands among their dependants, annexed a ſimilar condition, in which, perhaps, nothing more was at firſt intended, than the providing a ready mode of defence againſt an enemy—but the ſyſtem by degrees degenerated into actual oppreſſion. The nobles uſurped an unbounded dominion over theſe their vaſſals, and at length reduced the great body of the people into a ſtate of actual ſlavery—they were deprived of the natural and unalienable rights of humanity,

humanity, and, in ſhort, became what we now ſee, an oppreſſed, degraded, and miſerable multitude."

"You forget (ſaid De Courcy) that theſe conquerors embraced Chriſtianity, which ought neceſſarily to have prompted them to meliorate, rather than degrade the condition of their fellow creatures."

"You have named the very circumſtance (reſumed the ſtranger) which rivetted the chain, forged by gothic ambition and ignorance. Chriſtianity, at leaſt what

Europe receives as ſuch,* hath ever been found more favourable to civil tyranny than any other inſtitution in the annals of the world. Mark but its progreſs, and it will appear, that oppreſſion conſtantly followed in the train.

The nations ſubdued by Charlemaign, and which now compoſe ſeveral northern ſtates of Europe, were once happy in the freedom and ſimplicity of nature. Their manners and laws were the ſame as

* If any feel hurt at the freedom of theſe expreſſions, let it be remembred, that the only ſyſtem of Chriſtianity, known at that time, was that of the Romiſh church.

as in the time of the ancient Romans—each Canton was a Republic, in which all enjoyed equality of rights — but the arms of that ambitious ravager rendered them at the ſame time Chriſtians and ſlaves. Wherever he fixed his ſtandard, the church erected her dominion, and enſlaved the minds of the vanquiſhed. The prelates and paſtors of a religion, which knows no reſpect of perſons or conditions, have uniformly been the enemies of liberty in all its ſacred branches. It was their policy to ſuppreſs all freedom of thought, and to ſubjugate the human mind, in order to preſerve the

the ſpiritual dominion which they had very early uſurped, and to that end were ready to connive at the worſt of tyrants, who trampling on the civil rights of humanity, were diſpoſed to maintain the deſpotiſm of the church.

Thus civil and religious tyranny have, for their reſpective purpoſes, mutually ſupported each other, and thus the human mind has been bent to the yoke of oppreſſion, by the arts of an ambitious prieſthood, who, in ſupport of their own tyranny, inculcated the doctrines of implicit credulity, and paſſive ſubmiſſion, as articles of faith

faith and religion. Is it probable that millions of intelligent beings, equal by nature, would ſo long have groaned beneath the deſpotic cruelty of a few individuals, had not ſomething more effectual than the ſword, been employed in reducing them—and where can we look for this all-conquering power, but in eccleſiaſtical policy."

De Courcy liſtened with amazement to the bold ſpeech of his companion, yet not ſecretly diſpleaſed thereat. Accuſtomed from early youth to habits of reflection, he had been ſo much diſſatisfied with the adminiſtration of the

church, as ſtrongly to verge to the cauſe of infidelity and deiſm; he therefore eagerly purſued the diſcourſe, and ſaid,

"Tell me, I pray, if the ſubject has engaged your attention, whence it is that the church hath acquired ſuch powerful temporalities, ſince her ſacred founder uniformly rejected worldly honours and dignity. I cannot find that the diſciples of the ancient philoſophers, ever ſo flagrantly deviated from the principles of their maſters."

"A con-

"A concatenation of cauſes (anſwered the traveller) muſt have concurred to that end. The union of church and ſtate under Conſtantine the Great, tended to procure the clergy both wealth and influence. But we are now ſpeaking of the weſtern church excluſively, the commencement of whoſe grandeur may reaſonably be dated at the removal of the ſeat of empire to the Thracian boſphorus by the fore-mentioned prince. Rome politically fell when Conſtantinople roſe, and the eccleſiaſtical influence increaſed, in proportion as the civil authority was leſs energetic, yet neither the biſhops or paſtors

paſtors of that church had then any other power than that which is founded on virtue or intrigue—they had no civil juriſdiction, much leſs was the idea of ſupremacy annexed to the ſee of Rome; on the contrary, the precedency was claimed by the patriarch of Conſtantinople. The ſeveral diſputes in which the church was divided on ſpeculative points of religion, ended at laſt in a total ſeparation of the Greek and Latin churches, which circumſtance I conſider as highly advantageous to the ambition of Rome, who, by means of that ſchiſm, became avowedly the head of a diſtinct church.

It

It was long after this, however, that any thing like ſovereignty was affected by that metropolitan; yet in regard to wealth, the ſee of Rome ſeems to have been early an object of envy and competition. "Make me biſhop of Rome, (ſaid a certain Pagan, in the fifth century) and I will be a Chriſtian."

"The donation of Conſtantine, and of conſiderable eſtates in more than one country, had already enriched it. During the incurſions of the Goths, Vandals, and Heruli, the Popes were the comforters—the fathers of their diſtreſſed people, and if the public deſolation added

added nothing to their temporalities, it unqueſtionably did to their influence and authority.

"But I apprehend the eſtabliſhment of the Lombard kingdom in Italy, was more immediately favourable to the temporal power of Rome. That city was never under the dominion of the Lombards, nor could it actually be ſuppoſed under that of Conſtantinople, where ſcarcely the ſhadow of the Imperial dignity remained—here then was the period for the Popes to become ſubſtantially the ſovereigns of their people, even while acknowledging ſubmiſſion

to

to the Greek Emperors; for an empty homage paid to a diſtant lord, might very well comport with a real independance, ſupported by the influence of the ſacred office.

At length Pope Stephen, by pretending a commiſſion from the Apoſtle Peter, had the art to engage Charlemaign in his intereſt. That free-booter, and ſcourge of mankind, paſſed the Alps, ſeized on the whole exarchate of Ravenna, then in poſſeſſion of Aſtolphus, king of the Lombards, and made a preſent of it to the holy ſee. From this time the Popes

became apparently, what they had long been in reality—the ſovereigns of a large territory in the fineſt country of the world. It ſeems as though this northern conqueror had been raiſed up on purpoſe to eſtabliſh the power and grandeur of the Roman hierarchy; as he extended his conqueſts, he added to her communion, as if employed in ſubduing nations, only to enlarge her influence. The whole body of the clergy eſtabliſhing themſelves in the ſeveral kingdoms of Europe, were gratified by an uncontrouled authority, of which Rome was the ſource. The ignorance of the

age, which it was their intereſt to encourage, daily added to their riches. The keys of St. Peter, lodged in the holy ſee, could at all times unlock the coffers of the laity; and it was uſual for people, at death, to bequeath eſtates to the church, the more effectually to ſecure the repoſe of their ſouls. The Biſhops and Abbots were become temporal lords—ſome have poſſeſſed twenty thouſand vaſſals, which they not unfrequently led to battle, in order to depoſe a prince with whom they were diſſatisfied, or to favour the pretenſions of one who ſhould be more devoted to their intereſt. The

power of the ſupreme Pontiff to diſpoſe of crowns, is a doctrine which could only be promulgated in the very zenith of mental darkneſs, nor was it avowed 'till the corruptions of Chriſtianity had ſo compleatly plunged the world in ſuperſtition and credulity, as to render it ready to receive the monſtrous tenet, by which the kings of the earth are become merely deputies or viceroys of a prieſthood, which in effect conſtitutes the ſupreme power that directs all human affairs. But I ſtop here to pauſe with wonder and amazement, on the train of events which have given birth to a ſpecies of deſpotiſm,

deſpotiſm, unknown before, and inconceiveable by the human intellect, did not facts evince too clearly its exiſtence. Conquerors have ſubdued men, but the Biſhop of Rome only has had the addreſs to enſlave both body and mind."

"I thank you for your ſuccinct account of the ſubject, (ſaid De Courcy) but feign I would aſk, whether you are a Mahometan or Jew?"

"Neither—I am a Wickliffite, and expect one day to die for the crime of exploring truth."

"Heaven forbid, (reſumed Edward, catching hold of the ſtranger's hand) truth is of divine origin, and mocks the vain controul of men—ſhe needs not the ſecular power to avenge her inſults, or maintain her cauſe. Oh that men would learn mutual forbearance from the example of their common father."

They were now near a pleaſant cottage, at the door of which ſtood ſeveral ſmiling infants, waiting with anxious eyes the return of their father, who now appeared with De Courcy, whom he urged to take the comforts of repoſe in his

his humble dwelling, for the day was far ſpent. The wretched Edward conſented to reſt his wearied feet, and induced by the proffered friendſhip of his hoſt, diſcloſed at length the ſtory of his ſorrows, and in return received the balm of ſympathy from an upright and honeſt heart.

## CHAP. XII.

WHEN he departed from the Tower, he procured the habit of a mendicant friar, artfully concealing the vigour of youth beneath the cowl and tonſure of a venerable religious—but neither diligence or ingenuity could procure him the wiſhed ſucceſs. In vain he inquired for the lady Ethelinde. After a long time ſpent in toilſome wandering,

wandering, and harraſſed by the fear of being diſcovered, in which caſe, nothing leſs than his life would have atoned for his diſobedience to the royal mandate; and enduring the rigours of an inclement ſeaſon, expoſed to hunger, thirſt, and wearineſs, he chanced to meet with a peaſant, laden with proviſions for a neighbouring convent, in which, on the following day, a young noviciate was to take the veil.

"Holy Mary compoſe her ſorrows, (ſaid the peaſant, croſſing his breaſt) for the ſun hath not ſhone on a fairer, or more unfortunate

tunate maiden, than the daughter of Earl Belmont."

The peaſant having thus unwittingly conducted the anxious lover to the end of his painful inquiries, left him, and went on his way whiſtling as he rode, while De Courcy remained fixed to the earth, in an agony not to be deſcribed. In the ſame ſingular moment, he had both found and loſt the object of his painful ſearch. It was ſmall conſolation to know the place of her retreat, ſince ſhe no longer exiſted for him.

"To-

"To-morrow's ſun (cried he) will behold her renounce the world for ever."

But as he repeated the dreadful information, grief and deſpair were depicted on his countenance, and his air was that of one in a paroxyſm of inſanity. At length precipitately gathering his garments about him, he ran wildly to the convent, which contained the treaſure of his ſoul, and knocking at the gate, vehemently called on the lady Ethelinde. The ſacred garb which he ſtill wore, eaſily obtained him admittance to the grate, where ſpeedily the lovely noviciate

noviciate appeared, and far from recollecting the features of her beloved Edward, beneath the monkiſh cowl, ſhe gently aſked his buſineſs with her.

By this time reaſon had returned to his aid, and recollecting the neceſſity of prudence, he took from his boſom the ring, which he had conſtantly worn there, and with a trembling hand, preſented it to her view. At ſight of the well known token, the blood forſook her cheeks, and ſhe cried in a rapture of ſurpriſe and joy,

"Does

"Does he then live—oh ye propitious ſaints, I thank you."

"He does, (replied Edward, diſguiſing his voice) and aſks one laſt, one eternal adieu from the lips of Ethelinde—this night, at the midnight hour, he will ſcale the wall of yonder garden."

"Enough, (interrupted ſhe) I will meet him there."

The mendicant then retired, and Ethelinde, in a hurry of tumultuous paſſions, flew to her cell, where, in the firſt emotions of new-born joy, ſhe for ſome moments

ments forgot the dreadful barrier which now ſtood between her and felicity—but when it appeared awfully preſented to her view—when ſhe reflected, that in the courſe of a few hours, ſhe muſt make thoſe ſacred vows which would render it criminal to indulge his loved idea, her heart refuſed to urge the vital motion, and ſhe ſunk lifeleſs on her humble bed, from which ſtate of peaceful oblivion ſhe awoke not, 'till ſummoned to attend the abbeſs, in order to receive ſuch ghoſtly counſel as befitted the eve of her ſolemn renunciation of the world.

But

But the mind of the fair noviciate was no longer poſſeſſed by that apathy which the ſacred ſiſterhood, and even herſelf, had miſtaken for divine ſerenity; a tempeſt of conflicting emotions racked her breaſt, while tears and trembling marked the mental agony. The abbeſs aſcribing her diſorder to the infirmity of human nature, bade her retire to her cell, and ſeek compoſure in holy meditation.

Mean time the ſtars began to glitter in the azure canopy of heaven, and the buſy world retired to repoſe.

De

De Courcy having prepared every thing for his perilous adventure, took his ſtation beneath the garden wall of the convent—thrice he counted the convent clock reverberating on the ſilent air, while nought but the chirping of the graſshopper diſturbed the ſolemn ſtillneſs. At length the midnight bell called the ſiſters to attend the hallowed choir, and the deep reſounding organ animated the vocal ſtrains of enkindling devotion. The pious rite performed, all again was ſilent. Glimmering lamps flaſhed through the narrow windows, as the nuns repaſſed to their reſpective cells, and each inhabi-

tant of the ſacred manſion retired to ſhort and diſturbed repoſe.

Then it was that De Courcy, with the ardour of impatience and love, ſcaled the lofty wall, and alighted within the incloſure, which unhallowed feet were forbidden to defile. Soon he beheld a figure, robed in white, glide ſwiftly among the yew trees—his heart whiſpered it was Ethelinde, and rapid as the lightning, he flew to caſt himſelf at her feet—ſhe ſpoke, and her voice was the accent of love—it was a moment which might have cancelled the miſeries of an age.

On the day when the generous attachment of De Courcy was repaid with the blackeſt perfidy, on the part of him whom he had reſcued from miſery and deſtruction, Ethelinde, ſeized with profound horror of a father's crimes, and ſuppoſing her hapleſs lover loſt for ever, threw herſelf into a convent, determined to forſake a world, which preſented nothing but wretchedneſs and iniquity. Her noviciate was now expired, and on the morrow ſhe was to aſſume the veil.

"The virgin (purſued ſhe) has compaſſionated the tears I have ſhed

ſhed to thy memory, and has given me to know, that thou art yet alive, before the ſolemn vow ſhall cloſe my lips in ſilence, and forbid the utterance of De Courcy's name."

"What vow (replied he) can Ethelinde now make, which will not be a profanation in the ſight of heaven, ſave that of rewarding the ſufferings of her faithful Edward. Art thou not already mine, and wouldſt thou ſubſtitute falſehood for devotion?—no, my beloved—no cloiſtered vows muſt divide thoſe, whoſe ſouls have

long been united in bonds of the pureſt love."

"Why, by that yet dear idea, (ſaid ſhe, ſighing) wouldſt thou diſturb the ſacred repoſe of my ſoul—why force me to feel, that though ſecluded from the world within thoſe ſacred walls, my guilty ſoul will ſtill linger around the object of its early love? Oh, De Courcy, I would I had ſtill believed thee dead, then might my fond heart have treaſured up thy memory without a ſtain—but now farewell, thou beſt beloved of my ſoul, 'till we meet in thoſe realms, where

where it will be no crime to cheriſh a paſſion ſo pure as ours."

"Nor can it be on earth a ſin, (reſumed De Courcy) oh virtuous Ethelinde; believe me, no maxims of religion juſtify our ſeparation—already we are one, if true affection be that which conſtitutes a virtuous marriage—the holy pontiff himſelf, cannot diſſolve the ſacred tie. I ſwear then by yonder bleſſed moon, never to reſign thee—this moment is our's, the next may be replete with woe—come, then, let us fly together."

"Avaunt, thou delectable temptation (exclaimed the lovely novice, trembling with horror, yet unable to reſiſt the agreeable ſuggeſtion) what agent of darkneſs borrows that all perſuaſive tongue—is it De Courcy that would ſeduce his Ethelinde to perdition?"

"No, (cried he) I would lead her to happineſs—to the bliſs which waits on virtuous love."

He ſtill held her unreluctant hand, and gradually drew her towards the ladder, by which he had deſcended.

"Stop,

"Stop, (exclaimed ſhe, in accents of ſoft irreſolution) I conjure thee, tempt me not to this ſacrilege—am I not virtually profeſſed—oh ſpare thy Ethelinde's guilty weakneſs, and plunge not her ſoul in perdition."

At that moment the door of the convent grated on its ponderous hinges—the abbeſs, with attendants, appeared with lights.

"We are loſt," cried De Courcy, catching the half expiring Ethelinde in his arms. A moment was ſufficient to fix his firm reſolve, and he inſtantly bore his

charming prize beyond the boundaries of the ſacred ſanctuary. Love, blended with terror, gave wings to their feet—they purſued their flight, nor heard, as yet, the footſteps of the purſuer.

But now the convent bell ſounded alarm—the villagers were rouzed from ſleep, and the confuſion became general, as they iſſued in conſternation from their cottages.

The fugitives perceived the certainty of detection, ſince either to proceed or retreat, was equally pregnant with deſtruction. At that terrific criſis, their feet ſtumbled,

bled, they fell, and inſtantaneouſly found themſelves within a tomb, ſeveral feet beneath the ſurface of the earth.

"Here then, my gentle love, (whiſpered De Courcy) we have at leaſt found a ſecure aſylum. Malice itſelf ſleeps in the regions of death, and the rage of rancorous foes paſs not the gloomy barrier."

The trembling Ethelinde was at this time ſcarcely ſenſible of the eſcape which they had thus accidentally effected—but finding the noiſe of the purſuit gradually

ſinking

ſinking in ſilence, ſhe became more compoſed, and ſuffered her companion to entertain her with an account of the courſe it would be proper to purſue, as ſoon as they ſhould quit the gloomy receptacle of death, for which end, they waited only 'till the crowds, attracted by the alarm, ſhould have diſperſed.

As ſoon as the favourable moment appeared at hand, De Courcy tenderly called on her to ariſe, and reviſit the habitations of life; but juſt as he aſſiſted her to aſcend, a ponderous ſtone was placed at the mouth of the tomb, which preclud-

precluding all poſſibility of eſcape, preſented to their terrified imaginations, the horrid picture of a lingering death, amidſt mouldering bones and human duſt.

" 'Tis done, (cried Ethelinde, in a diſtracted tone) and we have now, my Edward, reached the period of our woes together—but ah! by what tremendous means;—better to have braved the fury of our enemies, and have periſhed by the vindictive ſtroke, than here to die by the excruciating hand of famine."

As

As thus bewailing their dreadful fate, ſhe tore her hair in all the agonies of madneſs and deſpair.

De Courcy, whoſe firm ſoul was not readily appalled, was meditating the poſſibility of eſcape. He attempted to force a paſſage, but in vain; the maſſy barrier eluded his proweſs, and he was compelled to deſiſt in ſilent deſpondency.

Sinking beneath the irreſiſtleſs doom which awaited, Ethelinde, in the fervour of deſpair, pulled from her pocket a ſmall dagger,

and

and preſenting it to De Courcy, ſaid,

" The moment is come, when the teſt of thy love for the devoted Ethelinde, is demanded. Ah, canſt thou behold her ſufferings, and refuſe to releaſe her from miſery. One kind effort of thy hand, my Edward, will ſet her tortured ſoul at liberty to wing its flight to bliſs."

He took the fatal ſteel from her agitated hand, and claſping her to his heaving boſom, exclaimed,

" Are

"Are theſe then our nuptial rights, oh thou mirror of ſpotleſs purity; and muſt the bloody deed atteſt the ardour of my affection? Ah, what haſt thou required?—Can I ſee thy pale limbs weltering in thy blood, ſhed by my accurſed hand?"

"Nay, then, (cried ſhe, ſnatching the weapon, pointing it to her breaſt) I will not be indebted to thy weak affection for the boon."

With ineffable emotion he ſeized her hand, and in ſtruggling to poſſeſs the inſtrument of death,

his arm forcibly ſtruck againſt a part of the cavern, and inſtantaneouſly a ſmall door burſt open, through which appeard ſome faint gleams of light. Dropping the dagger from her determined hand, a divine impulſe animated her diſordered mind with riſing gratitude, and ſhe joined the wondering Edward in prompt ejaculations of ardent praiſe for the newborn hope.

The door now happily diſcovered, opened into a long ſubterranean paſſage, from the extremity of which, the light of day feebly iſſued. The lovers loſt no time in

in exploring the path to deliverance, and ſoon perceived a grated door, not cloſely ſhut. Their emancipation from unutterable horrors and impending torment, was now at hand, and they hailed its approach with indeſcribeable emotion, when preſently the loud pealing of an organ broke on their aſtoniſhed ear, and too clearly convinced them that they had avoided deſtruction in the tomb, only to fall into the power of eccleſiaſtical vengeance, and doubtleſs to periſh by inquiſitorial torture.

The dreadful ſhock which the conviction excited, could not wholly

wholly reſtrain De Courcy from reflecting, with wonder and contempt, on the pious frauds of the church, for he now underſtood, that the tomb which they had juſt quitted, communitated, by means of this paſſage, with a ſociety of Monks, who were thus enabled to effect thoſe marvellous appearances at the tomb of the ſaint, which the deluded multitude were taught to revere as miraculous.

While theſe reflections gave a temporary ſuſpenſion to his ſenſe of the horrors of his ſituation, the chapel was again cleared, and all

was quiet. He then gently opened the grated door, and proceeded with the trembling Ethelinde to the chapel, from which he ſuppoſed the eſcape was eaſy; but here diſappointment again aſſailed them, the door was locked, and the key removed. Overwhelmed with diſtraction and deſpair, they again retreated to the dark paſſage, to bewail their miſerable fate, but were ſoon obliged to huſh their moans in ſilence, by the ſound of footſteps approaching; and preſently they ſaw one of the holy brotherhood enter the chapel, with a lighted taper in his hand—he opened the door with caution, and intro-

introduced a young female peaſant, and immediately both of them diſappeared together. Either by accident or deſign, the amorous pair had neglected to ſecure the entrance to the church, and De Courcy ſeizing the happy moment, with a tranſport not to be conceived, conveyed his beloved companion ſafely from that perilous ſituation.

## CHAP. XIII.

THE world once more lay before them, yet preſented no friendly aſylum—no ſecret retreat, to which they might, with ſafety, retire. Deſtruction lurked in every corner, and whitherſoever they turned themſelves, vengeance was ready to arreſt them. At length they eſpied, by the glimmering light of the moon, a thick foreſt,

at

at no great diſtance—thither they directed their trembling footſteps, hoping, beneath its dark ſhelter, to eſcape the vigilance of thoſe, whom their conduct had enraged. Here the attentive lover plucked the wild fruits and berries, to refreſh the exhauſted frame of his miſtreſs, for it was now two days and nights ſince they had taſted food. The ſoft gurgling of a rill was muſic to their ear. He procured her a draught of the reviving ſtream, and then began to caſt his eyes around, in ſearch of ſome den or cave, in which to ſhelter her from the nocturnal dew.

It was not long before ſuch a retreat was diſcovered, but how profound was their aſtoniſhment, to find it inhabited by human beings, who appeared in the habits of ſocial life. A fire was burning on the hearth at one end of the cave, and around it ſat a decent pair, attended by ſeveral healthful looking boys and girls, on whom they alternately ſmiled with parental delight; cheerfulneſs and content ſat in the faces of all the little family, and the whole ſcene exhibited a picture of domeſtic peace and harmony.

Before the lovers could ſubdue their curioſity and ſurpriſe, ſufficiently to withdraw undiſcovered, he who appeared the father of the family, and proprietor of the extraordinary dwelling, aroſe to greet them with ſo mild and courteous an air, as indicated a character, far ſuperior to the ſavage mode of exiſtence in which it was found. As he ſpoke, he ſurveyed the two emaciated fugitives with particular attention, then ſaid,

"You may enter this humble habitation, my friends, without fear—the church has no emiſſaries amongſt us."

"Alas, (whiſpered Ethelinde) what inevitable fate attends us?—we are loſt, my Edward;—we are diſcovered, even in this dreary wild."

Her countenance, as ſhe ſpoke, became ſtill more pale, and her frame ſhook with dreadful apprehenſion.

The ſtranger comprehending the cauſe of her agitation, reſumed, with a ſmile of benignity;

"Yes, lady, you are indeed diſcovered; and I alſo know, that a reward of a thouſand marks is offered

offered to thoſe who ſhall betray you—but be comforted, here are none but friends, partake therefore of ſuch food as we have, and afterwards enjoy in peace the reſt you appear ſo greatly to require. This is my wife, theſe are my children—this cave our abode, and for the church, let thoſe fear its cenſures, who are weak enough to venerate its power."

Notwithſtanding her ſituation, Ethelinde could not ſo far diveſt herſelf of habitual impreſſions, as to be able to hear ſuch an expreſſion without horror; but De Courcy, whom education had emancipa-

emancipated, in great meaſure, from the chains of bigotry and ſuperſtition, perceived ſo much frankneſs and benignity in the diſpoſition of their kind hoſt, as rendered him perfectly ſatisfied with the aſylum which his cave afforded. He ſoothed the gloomy apprehenſions of his dear companion, and they both partook of the homely food, which, with unfeigned good will, was ſet before them.

"I perceive (ſaid their courteous entertainer) that you are ſurpriſed to find an abode of ſocial life, in the midſt of this gloomy, and

and almoſt impenetrable foreſt. The circumſtances which led to ſuch a choice, muſt have been uncommon, and therefore, if you pleaſe, I will endeavour to amuſe the perturbation of your minds, by relating a brief hiſtory of my life."

Edward and Ethelinde, who had felt their curioſity ſtrongly excited, expreſſing their deſire of becoming acquainted with his adventures, he thus reſumed his diſcourſe.

## STORY OF GILDAS.

" The name of Gildas, which I bear, is but another term for reprobation, in that part of the kingdom where I paſſed my earlieſt years; for from my very infancy, I ſeemed to be marked out by deſtiny, as an outcaſt from true catholic ſociety. My father was a plain man, poſſeſſed of a ſmall farm, the bequeſt of his anceſtors, which by his own perſonal induſtry, he had rendered very productive, of not only the neceſſaries, but even ſome of the comforts of life. He was ſingularly devout,

and

and in regard to pilgrimages and penances, really outſtripped the zeal of his ſpiritual directors; but to his ſenſible affliction, the only child he had, was very far from manifeſting any of his own gracious diſpoſitions.

"Nature had endowed me with but a ſmall portion of that pliability of temper, which forms the principal feature in the character of a true Catholic. I remember, when a boy, I would not be reſtrained from indulging my appetite in ſuch things as invited my taſte, though on a faſt day—was not very ready at croſſing myſelf,

or

or telling my beads, and thought that the mediation of one ſaint, was full as well as that of half a ſcore, conſequently was at little pains to ſtore my memory with, ſo much as the names of thoſe venerable perſonages.

" Theſe graceleſs diſpoſitions, ſoon held me forth as a mark of public abhorrence, and cauſed my father to lament the day on which he had given being to ſuch an unworthy ſon. Yet though I was averſe to obey the doctrines of the church, and too refractory to ſubmit patiently to its diſcipline for the heinous neglect, I ſcrupulouſly

louſly reverenced my parents, and always felt peculiar pleaſure in rendering to any one, the beſt ſervices in my power.

When I was about two and twenty, my father died, and contrary to the expectations of all who knew him, was diſcovered to have been greatly involved in debt; upon which occaſion, I ſold as much ſtock from the farm, as was neceſſary to ſatisfy my parents creditors, by which I found myſelf in very indifferent circumſtances; and to add to my mortification on this account, I was on the point of marrying a virtuous young

young woman, to whom I had long been contracted. Many of my wiſer neighbours laughed at my ſimplicity, in impoveriſhing myſelf, in order to diſcharge debts which I was not lawfully engaged to pay; yet I judged the meaſure both conſiſtent with equity, and the reſpect I owed my father's memory; conſequently was happy in the conſciouſneſs of having acted with integrity, and for the reſt, I reſolved to apply myſelf ſo aſſiduouſly to labour, as I hoped, in due time, would retrieve my now difficult affairs; as for my marriage, I determined to defer it 'till better times, eſteeming it highly

highly unjuſt to reward the affections of a virtuous young creature, by involving her in diſtreſſes and miſery.

"Whilſt my mind was occupied by the uneaſineſs which ſuch circumſtances naturally excited, I was called on to diſburſe very conſiderable ſums, for the purpoſe of having maſſes ſaid for the repoſe of my father. Irritated by the reflection on my own embarraſſments, as well as the conviction, that they originated in the pious profuſion of my late parent towards the church, I anſwered

thoſe demands with more frankneſs than prudence.

" If (ſaid I to the friar, who ſolicited me) my father's integrity and virtues are not of power to releaſe him from purgatory, I believe your prayers will never do it."

" This reply was ſufficient to exaſperate the whole clerical body, and alſo to exhibit me as a moſt impious unbelieving wretch to the whole neighbourhood, who, accordingly, never ſuffered me to paſs without a brand of reproach.

" Still,

"Still, however, the affection of my charming Marian was undiminiſhed—ſhe received me with tenderneſs, when all the world conſpired to reject me, and even declared her conviction of the uprightneſs of my heart, notwithſtanding the obliquy caſt on me by the prieſthood. Thus encouraged by the favour of one, in whom my hopes of happineſs were centered, I proceeded in a regular courſe of induſtry, paying to all their juſt dues, and occaſionally contributing to the neceſſities of the unfortunate. The ill-will of my neighbours I returned by kindneſs, and braved the diſpleaſure of

the church, by an honeſt, temperate, and benevolent courſe of life, 'till at length, finding my affairs greatly retrieved, I was joined in marriage to the woman of my heart, and our union was crowned by a conſtant ſeries of unabating tenderneſs, and heart-felt felicity; and to add to our mutual happineſs, we were bleſt with ſeveral children, whom I brought up to habits of honeſt induſtry.

"Although I was far from being a devotee myſelf, I never attempted to prejudice the inclinations or taſte of my wife, who attended

tended to religious duties with punctuality. For ſome time I obſerved ſhe went to confeſſion with leſs alacrity than uſual, and at laſt was obliged to own to me, that ſhe was ſo conſtantly perſecuted with the amorous addreſſes of her confeſſor, as to dread the being again with him alone. Her remiſſneſs in this point, drew the licentious prieſt to our dwelling, where he aſſumed the moſt ſpecious appearances of friendſhip to me, who knew, he and his whole order deteſted; and as to my children, he affected to be ſo much attached to them that he was continually making them coſtly preſents; and

in ſhort, became almoſt an inmate to our family, to the great diſquietude of my wife, whoſe dread of his devices and unbridled paſſions, increaſed every day. Shocked with the enormity of his conduct, I at laſt reſolved to free her from his importunities, and therefore giving him to underſtand, that I was acquainted with the baſeneſs of his deſigns, ſwore I would cudgel his bones the next time he came beneath my roof.

" This declaration, which he doubted not the ſincerity of, freed us indeed from his viſits, and my wife from his perſecutions; but the

the matter was not to reſt here—the ſanctimonious hypocrite was wealthy, and poſſeſſed of much influence with the ſuperior clergy, who readily aſſiſted in the gratification of his revenge, as the nature of my offence ſenſibly touched the whole venerable body. I was generally known to be of a diſpoſition, not inclined to bury ſuch an incident in oblivion. To mar therefore the effects of my reſentment, as well as to wreak their vengeance on both my guiltleſs wife and myſelf, I was cited to anſwer to divers accuſations of contumely and diſobedience to the church; and on my refuſing to

make the proper ſubmiſſions to theſe iniquitous judges, a ſentence of excommunication was pronounced againſt me.

" I need not enumerate the horrid conſequences of ſuch anathema, which at one ſtroke cuts all the cords of the ſocial and relative connexions—ſuffice it to ſay, that from this hour I was regarded with univerſal horror, as one no longer intitled to the common privileges of human nature; and if I ſtirred abroad, was gazed at by men, women and children, as though my ſentence had transformed me into a monſter, diveſted of the form

form and faculties of a man; but this was not the worſt of my misfortunes, if it had, I could have borne it: I had ſoon the dreadful proſpect of ſeeing a beloved wife, and helpleſs children, deſtitute of bread, for I was entirely cut off from all civil connexions. If I ſold the products of my land, the purchaſer knew himſelf releaſed from the obligation of payment, and that redreſs by the laws was no longer in my power to claim. My property was every day deſtroyed before my face—my cattle killed—my crops laid waſte by thoſe who imagined they were executing the vengeance of heaven

againſt

againſt an attrocious offender; ſo that my affairs, by neceſſity, went rapidly to ruin, and I could expect from none, even the common offices of humanity.

"My dear Marian felt the wretchedneſs of our caſe more ſenſibly than myſelf, and perpetually accuſed herſelf of being the unhappy cauſe of our common miſery."

"It is I, my dear Gildas, (ſaid ſhe) who have brought ruin into your boſom. That fatal beauty, which I valued only for your ſake, has proved your bane—it has pul-

led

led down hopeleſs deſtruction on the head of my beloved huſband, and theſe unfortunate babes, who are curſed for my ſake."

"Say rather, (anſwered I) my charming Marian, that the inflexibility of your virtue, is to me a treaſure more valuable than the ſhrine of St. Peter. If we ſuffer, let us glory in the cauſe; and though we can beſtow on our children no more than poverty and contempt, yet their mother's virtue, and their father's honour, will be a worthy portion, and ſuch as is not always in poſſeſſion of happier families."

"In

" In ſhort, each ſtrove to take the blame of the unfortunate affair from the other, and by mutual tenderneſs and increaſing affection, to leſſen the weight of our common calamity, but neither her firmneſs nor courage were equal to the force of her affliction—ſhe fell ſick, and long hovered apparently on the verge of the grave; during which diſtreſsful period, not one neighbour would tender the ſmalleſt aſſiſtance—they unanimouſly avoided our door, as though it concealed a dreadful peſtilence. Many heavy months did we ſuffer the complicated evils of ſickneſs and want—often were

we

we without food, nor were our children allowed to ſnatch the offal morſal, which the rich threw to the dogs, and our only ſupport was the wild herbs of the field. Yet it pleaſed heaven to ſpare my Marian's life, and I could not, therefore, be compleatly miſerable.

" Let us ſeek, my love, (ſaid I) ſome deſolate region, where the foot of man approaches not—let us herd with the beaſts of the foreſt, who ſurely are leſs cruel and unfeeling than mankind.

" She eagerly approved the ſuggeſtion—we left our cottage in the

the dead of night—I ſupported my wife, and our children followed. Not knowing whither to go, we travelled ſome forty or fifty miles, and at length ſet us down in the ſhelter of this foreſt, in which we diſcovered a cave, once occupied, no doubt, by ſavage beaſts, but now empty, and holding forth a peaceful refuge to the outcaſts of mankind. I quickly appropriated it as our future dwelling, and here, during the courſe of many a year, we have found health, ſafety, and content. As I am not perſonally known in this part of the country, I frequently go out collecting alms, with which we procure neceſſaries,

neceſſaries, but our chief ſupport is obtained by the uſe of my bow and arrows, with which I take ſuch animals as are wholeſome to man. A lake, hard by, yields us plenty of fiſh, ſo that the cravings of hunger have never been unſatisfied. In fine, we have here all we want or deſire—while happy in ourſelves, we look back with contempt on the world we have quitted, and feel our boſoms conſtantly animated with gratitude to heaven, for the comforts of our being. When the ſun riſes, we offer the homage of thankful hearts, and when darkneſs again approaches, lie down in confidence of

of paternal favour and protection. Our religion is that of nature, the ſpontaneous effect of the heart and underſtanding. When we behold the admirable frame of the univerſe, can we doubt that the Maker is all-wiſe; or when we ſee the earth ſtored with plenty, muſt we not be convinced, that he is benign. We ſee not the animals prey on their own ſpecies, and therefore conclude that man, who ſports in the miſeries of his fellow-creatures, acts not conſiſtently with his original deſign. A principle of univerſal benevolence, and love to all mankind, without regard to prejudice or

opinion,

opinion, is cheriſhed in our breaſts, by obſerving, that the bounty of Providence alights indiſcriminately on all ſects and nations; nor can parſimonious diſtruſt exiſt with us, when we conſider, that the birds of the air are cloathed and fed, by the ſame unceaſing liberality, which renews the year, and ſcatters plenty through all nature."

Gildas here made a grateful pauſe, and the complacency of his ſoul was reflected in the benign and cheerful looks of his ſurrounding family. De Courcy, ſtruck with the purity and juſtneſs of his ſentiments, exclaimed,

"Oh enviable happineſs, ſuperior to the refinements of congregated ſociety, and virtue above the reſtrictions of a ſyſtem, deſerving ſurely of a better manſion than this wretched cavern."

"Call not our beloved dwelling by that name, (anſwered Gildas) for after many years of peaceful reſidence, I would not, with my preſent feelings and attachments, exchange it for a palace—nay, not for an etherial ſeat, could I ſuppoſe that laſcivious monks, and avaricious friars, would there alſo have acceſs."

"You

" You may be aſſured, friend, (ſmiling) they will not—I am perſuaded no ſanctity of habit can render iniquity acceptable in the eye of the ſovereign judge."

## CHAP. XIV.

DURING the narrative of Gildas, Ethelinde croſſed herſelf ſeveral times, with great devotion—for though her boſom was the ſeat of innocence, ſhe had been bred up in ſo implicit a reverence of the prieſthood, as to be able to conceive of no ſin more heinous, than diſreſpect to that ſacred body. The contempt which Gildas had, through-

throughout his whole ſtory, manifeſted of the church's cenſures and diſcipline, ſerved to render her apprehenſions more terrible — ſhe could by no means imagine, that ſafety was in reality to be found in the ſociety of an excommunicant, or that his fidelity could prove ſuperior to the temptation of a thouſand marks, eſpecially as to the certainty of reward, there was added a ſtrong probability of his being readmitted to the boſom of the church, ſhould he betray the culprits to the eccleſiaſtical power. But theſe ſecret gloomy bodings were gradually diſperſed, by the open and friendly conduct

of Gildas and his family, with whom the poor perſecuted fugitives remained in ſafety and tranquillity, 'till it was ſuppoſed the ardour of purſuit was ſomewhat abated.

In the mean time, Gildas made frequent excurſions to the neighbouring towns and villages, with a view to glean ſuch intelligence, as might be intereſting to his gueſts.

At length it was believed they might remove, without immediate hazard; himſelf and his eldeſt ſon, engaged to guide them, by

private roads, to the ſea ſide, where they found no difficulty in procuring a paſſage acroſs the channel. The only embarraſſment they felt at this criſis, originated in the earneſt wiſhes, both of Edward and Ethelinde, to reward the fidelity of their guide. To theſe intimations, with diſintereſted generoſity, he replied,

"The higheſt rewards you could beſtow, muſt be unacceptible to me, becauſe greatly inferior to that which I have already received, namely, the conſciouſneſs of having performed that which was due from me as a man, and a

fellow-ſufferer of the ills of humanity. I am already paid, nor could you add any thing to my ſatisfaction."

"Exalted creature, (cried De Courcy) ſee my dear Ethelinde, what virtue may exiſt without the pale of the church."

They then parted with tears and prayers, and the lovers happily ſaw themſelves landed on the other ſide of the channel.

Nothing now but ſcenes of rapture, and uninterrupted happineſs, danced before their delightful imagina-

imagination—paſt extremities ſerved but to exhilirate their perception of preſent ſecurity and joy, and to render a long perſpective of future bliſs, more welcome to their view. Nothing occurred to retard their progreſs into Italy, where De Courcy expected, in a ſhort time, to preſent the woman of his choice to his noble friend, and paternal uncle, and already anticipated the pleaſure which that delightful interview would produce—how, ſurrounded with the ſocial band, he would repeat the hiſtory of his ſufferings, ſince laſt they parted—the hair breadth eſcapes, and dreadful hazards, by which

which he had obtained poſſeſſion of his heart's beſt treaſure.

But at the moment when hope was moſt ſanguine, and filial expectation trembling alive, he learns the fatal tidings, that the Duke of Norfolk was no more. Not even the preſence of Ethelinde could ſuſpend the workings of his honeſt nature—on her breaſt he reclined his drooping head, in a ſilence more eloquent than wordy ſorrow, while on his pale cheek ſhe drop'd a ſhower of ſympathetic tears.

The gentle Philippa, and the Count her huſband, flew to em-

brace

brace the long expected pair. De Courcy was received, as one whom the adamantine gates of death had given back, and his Ethelinde as ſuch an acquiſition to their domeſtic enjoyments, as was ſcarcely to be hoped for. But before he would indulge in the participation of a ſiſter's joy, he repaired to the ſacred ſpot which contained the mortal remains of his friend and patron, and at the tomb diſſolved in a tranſport of grief, conceivable only by minds which, like his, are alive to the generous and ſocial affections.

The

The lovers arrived ſo near the completion of their tendereſt hopes, waited only the lapſe of ſuch time as decently demanded, as a tribute of filial reſpect and unfeigned regard, before the holy prieſt ſhould unite their willing hands.

The Count Bologna, inſpired with true fraternal affection, inſiſted that the nuptials ſhould be celebrated at his palace, with all the magnificence which his friendſhip, and their reſpective merit required, and his amiable Counteſs impatiently greeted the approaching hour, which ſhould preſent the

the daughter of Earl Belmont a ſiſter to her arms; but on the evening preceding the ſacred rite, Ethelinde was ſuddenly ſeized by a violent diſtemper, which increaſed ſo rapidly, that by the hour when ſhe was to have become a bride, ſhe was, in all likelihood, ſhortly to be a breathleſs corpſe. The aids of medicine were ſought in vain—the fatal malady raged in her veins, and death ſat triumphant on her cloſing eye-lids.

De Courcy, incapable of being torn from her ſide, clung to the pillow which ſupported her drooping

ing

ing head, breathing ardent ejaculations for her recovery; while in the height of delirum, ſhe called on her beloved Edward—accuſed the tardy hours which with-held him from her ſight, and inſenſible of his embrace, deplored him as torn from her for ever. The fervor of love, expreſſed in the wild ravings of a brain diſturbed, heightened the gloom of the diſtreſsful ſcene, and rived the ſoul of her Edward with anguiſh ineffable.

At length ſhe became calm, as the final moment apparently drew on. A prieſt then attended, to ſooth

ſooth by his conſolatory aid, the dark unknown paſſage—with him the dying maid was a long time alone, and after his departure, deſired to be left to ſolitary meditation—ſhe was obſerved to weep bitterly, and her frequent exclamations, indicated the inward ſtruggles of ſorrow and deſpair. At laſt ſhe fell into a ſlumber, during which the attendants obſerved her mind much agitated—but ſhe awoke as though refreſhed, and the ſigns of diſſolution evidently began to diminiſh.

Tranſported with joy, at the proſpect of ſeeing his beloved Ethelinde

Ethelinde reſtored to his hopes, De Courcy flew to the bedſide, but a ſilent forbidding motion of her hand, repreſſed his ardour—ſhe intreated him to withdraw, in a cold and frigid tone, and he obeyed with tender reluctance. From this period her behaviour was gloomy and diſturbed—ſhe ſaw no one but the Counteſs, and that not without tears. Still the malady gradually decreaſed—her health returned, but not happineſs—a ponderous grief lay on her ſoul, but the cauſe was as yet an impenetrable ſecret.

At

At length ſhe ſummoned her wretched lover, together with the Count and Philippa, to her apartment, and in compoſed and firm accents, thus addreſſed them.

" My noble friends, and you my Edward, whom late my ſoul held dearer than herſelf, attend, I conjure you, to the wondrous tale I ſhall unfold. On that ſad night, when I was prepared to cloſe my eyes on all beneath the ſun, and learning the hard leſſon of parting from thee, De Courcy, for ever, a kind of drowſineſs ſeized upon my faculties, and I ſunk into a forgetfulneſs of all ſurrounding ob-

jects. In this abſtraction from corporeal things, (I call it not ſleep) a heavenly viſion ſtood before my eyes—the muſic of the ſpheres raviſhed my ear—the incenſe of Arabia breathed around, when lo! apparent to my view appeared the Virgin Mother—her robe was glittering as the ſun, and her countenance irradiated with benignity. She caſt on me a look of mingled pity and ſeverity, and thus ſpoke."

"What doſt thou here, daughter of error and miſery?—why haſt thou forſaken mine altar, flown from my protection, and deſtroyed

thy ſoul?—was not I the object of thy vows, when loſt in carnal wretchedneſs, thou ſoughteſt an aſylum in my ſanctuary?—when convinced of the emptineſs and vanity of all terreſtrial bliſs, thou didſt voluntarily relinquiſh the world, to ſeek divine peace in the conventual life?—why then haſt thou abandoned the ſource of thy true joy, to venture on a world, in which thou canſt know only ſorrow?—but I know thy weakneſs, and thy fondneſs for ſenſual delights—for theſe thou haſt broken thy vow—the vow often confirmed in thy inmoſt ſoul, and about to be ratified with thy lips. Im-

pious ſacrilege — horrid profanation — but know, oh perjured wretch, that thou art mine—thou canſt not diſengage thyſelf, nor ſhalt thou affront my power. This night ſhould have been thy laſt, but I yet ſpare thee, to try the purity of thy virtue. Go, then, and bid adieu to all thy ſenſual hopes—go, tear thyſelf from the arms of him thou loveſt, and return to thy duty—yet will I receive thee — my ſanctuary ſhall open wide its door, and thou ſhalt compleat thy vows—know, that if thou refuſeſt thus to devote thyſelf to me, thy days ſhall conſume in miſery — thy comforts, over which

which thou hovereſt with carnal appetite, ſhall wither, 'till deſtruction overtake thee."

At this aſtoniſhing relation, the Count and Counteſs looked on each other with a kind of believing aſtoniſhment; but De Courcy, at no loſs to conceive the occaſion of the incident, replied,

" And is it, my deareſt Ethelinde, for a mere illuſion of a diſturbed imagination, that the traces of melancholy have of late ſat on that lovely brow?—oh riſe, my love, ſuperior to the imbecility of nature, and aſſert thy powers of

reaſon. It can be nothing ſtrange, that under the preſſure of bodily diſeaſe, the mind ſhould be diſturbed in its functions, ſince in our frame, the connexion between the animal and intellectual faculties, is knit with inſcrutable affinity. Diſturb not then thy peace with the mere chimeras of imagination—happineſs awaits us—we will ſeize the bleſſed hour—we will be one beyond the reach of fate to divide."

" Never, never, (cried ſhe, firmly) De Courcy, I will never pollute the ſacred writes of marriage, with the guilt of ſacrilege

on

on my head. Was I not all, but a few verbal ceremonies, actually devoted to the conventual life—yet I impiouſly fled from the ſacred roof—my heart then whiſpered my guilt, even amidſt the endearments of love—but I heard not the monitor within—I liſtened only to thy ſweet perſuaſive voice, and loſt myſelf in a labyrinth of delicious ſin—but repentance is not yet, I truſt, too late."

The afflicted lover hearing her perſevere in ſo unexpected and unaccountable a ſtyle, was impelled to conclude, that her reaſon was yet unſettled, and therefore

claſping her ardently to his boſom, while from his moiſtened eyes he wiped off the ſtarting tear, he uttered a pathetic petition for the reſtoration of her mental compoſure.

" Do not, my beloved Edward, (cried ſhe) imagine my words to be the mere effuſion of a diſordered underſtanding. Ah, I would the pangs which now rend my ſoul, were the offspring of imaginary evils, but the fatal cauſe refuſes to give way to the ſpecious force of argument—and wilt thou do nothing to ſnatch thy Ethelinde from perdition?—wilt thou refuſe

to

to give me back the love I gave thee?—wilt thou cruelly oppoſe my with-drawing from the world for ever?—No, no—it cannot be that thou hateſt me thus."

"Powers of mercy! (exclaimed he) what haſt thou intimated?—reſign thee, my Ethelinde—give up, for a mere chimera, the deareſt treaſure of my ſoul?—never, never—this hand is mine, by every tender tye is mine, nor will I relinquiſh it, but at the expence of the vital ſtream which warms my agitated heart."

"Then

" Then I am loſt—doomed to never ending woes, and by whom? by the man who profeſſes to love me."

She then dropped on her knees, and thus, in an energetic tone of voice, proceeded.

" Here, then, let me aſk from pity, what love denies.—De Courcy, ſpare the wretch, whoſe only crime has been, the loving thee too well—for this I loſt my ſoul, except as ranſomed by thy free conceſſions, to the demand of the offended virgin—and haſt thou ſo little love as to refuſe?—canſt thou delibe-

deliberately reſolve to conſign thy Ethelinde to perdition?"

"Capricious ſex, (cried he, greatly diſturbed) deſigned to be ever the cruel tyrants of our feelings—but what have I ſaid?—forgive me, Ethelinde, and pity my diſtraction. What wouldeſt thou extort from me?—ſuffer me to leave thee—obey the impulſe of thy heart—but think me not more inſenſible than the cold marble—think not that I can calmly acquieſce with this extravagance of a pious, yet enthuſiaſtic mind."

"Nay,

"Nay, then, if De Courcy determines thus, my choice is fixed; ye holy altars, be ye ſecured from my unhallowed ſteps—ye hoſt of ſaints, turn from me with abhorrence—open your ſullen gates, ye regions of eternal night, to receive a voluntary inhabitant—perdition is my choice, I embrace it, and my firm ſoul turns unreluctant from celeſtial joys."

The agonizing lover, unable to ſupport the dreadful ſtruggle of his ſoul, threw himſelf proſtrate on the floor, with groans of unutterable anguiſh, and Philippa perceiving that life had almoſt quitted

ted the heaving boſom of Ethelinde, bore her immediately to an adjoining apartment. Here the Counteſs vigilantly exerted the efforts of reaſon and friendſhip, to divert the fair enthuſiaſt from her miſtaken apprehenſions, but ſhe found her too deeply impreſſed by the conviction of her ſacrilegious offence, to be able to calm the tempeſt of her ſoul. After a ſeries of fruitleſs endeavours, ſhe left her with tears, and went to ſeek her unhappy brother, whom ſhe found in deep diſcourſe with the Count.

De Courcy was firmly perſuaded, that the ſingular conduct of his miſtreſs had more of prieſtcraft for its origin, than rational conviction; he could not forget, that a few hours preceding the marvellous viſion, ſhe had confeſſed herſelf to a certain Friar, whoſe ghoſtly counſel had doubtleſs given to her thoughts their conſequent caſt. But the Count and Counteſs could diſcern nothing of this—they were perſuaded that the incident was really ſupernatural, and that it was neceſſary the unhappy maid ſhould obey the divine impulſe.

" Unleſs

"Unleſs (perſued his Lordſhip) that ſhe will permit a diſpenſation from her vow, to be ſolicited at Rome, and I doubt not but I have intereſt ſufficient, to obtain that condeſcenſion from the holy father."

This meaſure, however, Ethelinde peremptorily forbade, "the command of the virgin (ſhe ſaid) was abſolute, and admitted not of temporiſing." But ſhe now forbore the ſoliciting her lover's conſent to her entering on a conventual life, and in gloomy ſubmiſſion prepared to yield him that hand, to which he had, in the view of

honour

honour and equity, indiſputable right. But ſuch a ſacrifice, ſuited not with the delicate nature of Edward's affection, or with that generoſity which characterized his mind. He ſuffered ſome time to elapſe, before he would cloſe with a meaſure, which ſeemed to have enthuſiaſm alone for its baſis, hoping that time, and cool deliberation, might effect the change on which his happineſs depended; but here his expectations were in vain, he therefore finally determined to renounce his deareſt wiſhes, rather than ſecure felicity to himſelf, at the expence of Ethelinde's peace.

" Go,

"Go, (cried he) oh thou, who in thyſelf compriſeſt all my ſum of earthly bliſs—go, find thy felicity in a cloiſter, and know, by this expenſive ſacrifice, how dear thou art to De Courcy's ſoul—he buys thy happineſs at the coſt of his own—oh mayeſt thou find that which thy piety and virtue ſeek—oblivion of terreſtrial attachments, ineffable peace, and perennial ſunſhine of the ſoul. In thy oraiſons, if I aſk nothing improper, let thy Edward be remembered."

He could utter no more, but haſtily turned aſide his face to conceal his emotion. Ethelinde

graſping his hand, put it to her lips.

" This (ſaid ſhe, with a deep groan) for the laſt time—but my heart ſtrings crack, they break—aſſiſt me all ye ſaints, and thou virgin mother, aid thy hapleſs votary in this ſevere, this final conflict. Edward, thou haſt not yet compleated thy generous work—thou haſt not pronounced my pardon—Say, canſt thou forgive the wrongs, the indignities, the woes thou haſt ſuſtained on Ethelinde's account?"

" No

"No more, (cried he) if thou wouldſt not ſhake the dear bought fortitude of my ſoul — be thou bleſt — our paſt ſufferings lie buried with our blaſted joys — let no unpleaſant retroſpect mar thy peace."

In a tempeſt of contending feelings, he then tore himſelf from her preſence, and ran to ſeek a ſequeſtered ſpot, where he might, unſeen, indulge a weakneſs, which yet he had not learned to ſubdue.

## CHAP. XV.

A CONVENT, dedicated to the Virgin, was the retreat which Ethelinde choſe to become the ſcene of her penitentiary vows. She was received by the holy ſiſterhood with open arms, and ſhortly after took the veil amongſt them.

The Count and Counteſs Bologna, were certainly among the number

number of thoſe, who conſidered this incident as adding to the triumphs of religion, and admired the heroiſm of a young maiden, who in the bloom of life, when love, and every earthly ſatisfaction, woed her enjoyment, could nobly reſolve to abandon them all, for the ſake of devoting her future life to cloiſtered piety. Yet much as they admired the lovely devotee, the tender diſappointments, the ill requited conſtancy, and obſtinate ſorrows of De Courcy, intereſted their pity and affection in the livelieſt manner—they ſought to alleviate his chagrin, by a round of amuſements, as well as a thou-

ſand tender affections, which their friendſhip and love for him conſtantly prompted; but neither theſe, nor arguments deduced from religion or philoſophy, could reſtore his mind to its wonted hilarity. But the late event had produced one effect, which they were far from ſuſpecting, namely, a total alienation of his attachment from the church, which at that period held all Europe in mental bondage.

It has already been obſerved, that in the family of the Duke of Norfolk, nothing like bigotry obtained; Edward therefore brought with

with him from that paternal manſion, a mind open to the convictions of reaſon, and the rays of truth. He had, in the courſe of his adventures, met with circumſtances, which tended to impreſs him with no high ideas of clerical purity or integrity, and during his wanderings in England, had acquired ſome knowledge of the tenets of Wickliffiſm, which having been promulgated in a preceding reign, had already ſpread very conſiderably. However, the charge of hereſy could not properly belong to him, 'till an event which had deprived him of every thing valuable on earth, the loſs

of his beloved Ethelinde, after he had, at the expence of ſo much diſtreſs and hazard, obtained her, ſat heavy on his ſoul, and rendered him entirely diſaffected to a religion, which contradicted the firſt principles of reaſon and nature, by ſuperſtitiouſly enjoying the ſacrifice of the moſt innocent and rational propenſities—thwarting the happineſs of ſocial life, and ſubverting the welfare of humanity. The caprice, or rather imbecility of Ethelinde's determination, was, he ſuppoſed, occaſioned by the influence of eccleſiaſtical counſels, which, it too plainly appeared, were directed rather to the

the advantage of the church, than of the civil community—and he now wiſhed for nothing ſo earneſtly, as an opportunity of living agreeable to the dictates of reaſon, unreſtrained by the power of ſuperſtition, and the ſpiritual tyranny which he abhorred.

After ſome time, he turned his thoughts to the Iſle of Mona, where, amidſt the profound darkneſs of the age, ſome veſtiges of learning, and liberality of ſentiment, were yet to be found.

Concealing this deſign from all thoſe, whoſe friendſhip would have oppoſed

oppoſed the meaſure, he privately embarked on board a ſhip, bound for South Britain, and reached the tranquil ſhore he had deſired. Here, as he walked to and fro on the beach, admiring the azure canopy, ſtudded with gold, and reflecting a blaze of glory in the glaſſy boſom of the wave, he was led to obſerve a cavern, cut by the hand of nature, in a ſide of the cliff. The moon juſt riſen, illuminated the apartment, and diſcovered to his view a variety of beauties, ſuch as the ſculptor's hand would have imitated in vain. Pleaſed with the charming receſs, he cried,

" Why

"Why ſhould I wander farther in ſearch of an habitation, when I find one prepared by the hand of nature, wherein all which unvitiated taſte demands, is to be found; who, that poſſeſſes ſuch an abode, would envy the poor magnificence of palaces."

The ſolitude of the place was congenial to the preſent diſpoſition of his mind—he took of the long ſoft graſs, which grew in plenty without, and compoſed a pillow, ſoft as the cygnets down—a block of marble, poliſhed by the current of a rivulet, formed a table, whereon luxury ſpread not her pernicious

cious cates—the ſimple herb was his food, and a clear fountain hard by the cave, quenched his thirſt. The once gay and gallant De Courcy, who had ſhone the admiration of courts, was no longer to be diſcovered beneath the goat's-ſkin garment of an anchorite. Sorrow had furrow'd his face with the traces of premature age, and his beard, already grey with care, comported with the venerable character of an hermit. Here he reflected on the misfortunes of his life, 'till familiarized with grief, its force was meliorated, and the acuteneſs of woe gradually aſſumed the

the penſive ſoftneſs of ſilent unrepining melancholy.

Yet ſuperior to the narrow ſentiment which dwells only on ſelfiſh cares, the hermit's reflections were often diverted from their painful object, by exerciſes of kindneſs and humanity.

The iſlanders, ſtruck by the dignity of his mien, and ſtill more enamoured of the ſanctity, ſweetneſs, and wiſdom of his character, ſoon began to conſider him with filial veneration and eſteem—they flocked to the hermitage, eager to unfold their ſeveral tales of ſorrow,

and

and pour their griefs into his paternal bosom. To all, comfort was at hand—he soothed the unhappy—counselled the distressed—encouraged virtue, and rebuked the vile, 'till, like the bounteous sun, he had diffused peace and happiness all around. He taught them truth, devoid of mystery, and inculcated, not a system of slavish superstition, but the active duties of social life. To him the sick and diseased repaired for aid—he had studied nature, and discovered the healing properties of plants and herbs—in fine, the grateful multitude found in him a father, friend, physician, and repaid his

benevolent

benevolent cares with reverence, bordering on adoration.

Beſides theſe daily occupations, there were others, which while humanity approved his cares, wrung from his ſympathizing boſom many a painful ſigh.

England, already devoted to the ſcourge of civil war, was deſtined alſo to witneſs the horrors of religious perſecution. The bright dawn of celeſtial truth had begun to viſit that land—Wickliff, with honeſt boldneſs, had preſumed to lift the viel from the baſe fabric of Romiſh ſuperſtition—had taught the

the miſguided multitude to think, and dared to queſtion the validity of doctrines, which for ages had deceived, and enſlaved the maſs of mankind. His followers were numerous, and awakened the rancorous jealouſy of the champions of error; but now the wretchedneſs of the times afforded opportunity for wreeking their dreadful rage.

Henry the Second, in order to ſupport his dubious claims to the Britiſh throne, by eccleſiaſtic ſuffrage, lent the aid of civil power, to ſtrengthen the uſurpation of the church.

Now,

Now, for the firſt time, England beheld her children expiring in the flames, to ſatiate the rage of men, who ſtiled themſelves the miniſters of divine benignity—to ſuppreſs the freedom of thought, and bend the human intellect to the yoke of an ambitious prieſthood, the kindling faggot blazed, and martyrs' blood enriched the parent earth.

To eſcape the perſecutors rage, many fled their wretched country, and not a few took ſhelter in the Iſle of Mona. To theſe, the lonely cavern of De Courcy, became the welcome abode of peace

and friendſhip, while his lips ſpake peace to their agitated minds, and his words yielded the balm of conſolation.

Inſpired with patriotic enthuſiaſm, he cried,

"O, Wickliffe! illuſtrious ſhade,
I honour thy ſacred duſt——
I hail thee as the firſt of Engliſhmen, who dared to brave the rage of ſuperſtition, in the cauſe of intellectual freedom. High in the annals of thy country, ſhall be thy name, when anti-chriſtian tyranny ſhall ceaſe, and reaſon ſhall be free to preſcribe the ſyſtem of religious

ligious worſhip, unfettered by human authority. The day will come, the hour of *reformation* will arrive, which ſhall ſtamp a new æra on the hiſtory of mankind. A ſucceſſion of *Proteſtant princes* ſhall fill the Britiſh throne, under whoſe ſway, both civil and religious liberty ſhall flouriſh — the equal rights of humanity be owned, and underſtood, and ſocial happineſs be eſtabliſhed on a firm and ſolid baſis. The moral world already ſtruggles to regain its priſtine beauty and order — you then, my friends, who ſuffer by the glorious effort — you, who in defence of your natural rights, as men — as

beings endowed with the privilege of thought and free opinion, have fled your country to embrace hunger, diſtreſs and nakedneſs, yet ſupport your drooping courage, by the bright view of that future ſucceſs which waits to crown your generous efforts. Remoteſt ages ſhall enjoy the benefit of your ſufferings. You build, at the price of painful toil, perhaps of life itſelf, an edifice which ſhall ſurvive with glory, when Rome and tyranny ſhall be no more."

CHAP.

## CHAP. XVI.

SEVEN years had now rolled their courſe, ſince Edward De Courcy had retired from the knowledge of public life, and ſought to heal the wounds which love had made, in the deep ſolitude of a hermit's cell. Ethelinde was ſtill the theme of his ſolitary meditations. Time had meliorated the paſſions of youthful vigour—diſappointment had loſt its ſting—

her capricious weakneſs was forgotten, and nought but the memory of her virtues, ſurvived on the tablet of his ſoul. He knew, that in devoting herſelf to the conventual life, ſhe had ſacrificed the deareſt inclinations of her heart, to what ſhe imagined a religious obligation. Could he then remember, with reſentment, an error which had its riſe in the nobleſt principle? as often as memory recalled her idea, the ſilent tear would trickle down his cheek, and he found a melancholy pleaſure in carving her name on the trees around.

In

In that ſeaſon, when the ſun cuts the line which encircles the globe, the hermit was penſively watching the glowing embers on his lonely hearth, when the roaring winds impetuouſly aroſe, and ſhook the ancient oaks which environed his cave—the ſea riſing in angry billows, ſeemed to chide the ærial fury, and nature trembled with the elemental conflict—the dreary night at length was waſted, and the tempeſt was huſhed in ſilence. With the riſing morning he quitted his cell, and beheld the ſhore ſtrewed with ſigns of ſhipwreck—broken planks and ſhivered maſts were waſhed

up with each revolving wave. At length he perceived a human figure floating on the waves; he exerted every effort to ſecure it for the rites of burial, and charitably bore the cold corſe, with that view, to his hermitage. But now a profound ſigh, proclaimed the exiſtence of vital animation. He haſtened to aſſiſt reviving nature, and beheld the countenance of a woman—the features were familiar to his heart—he ſtarted—a deep groan heaved his boſom.

"How illuſive is imagination," cried he, as he prepared ſuch medicinal

medicinal aid as his humble ſtores afforded.

The lady now opening her eyes, and viewing the venerable figure before her, ſaid, in a feeble accent,

" Spare, O holy ſage, thy charitable cares—all I aſk, is one rood of ſacred earth, to conceal the duſt of Ethelinde de Belmont."

" Powers of mercy! (exclaimed he) what ſound deceived my ear?—am I awake, or in the bands of viſionary ſlumber?"

Roufed

Rouſed at a well known voice, the expiring fair one looked anxiouſly around, to diſcover whence it proceeded; while trembling with ſtrange emotions, he approached her, and in her palid viſage, traced the lineaments of a face, which time could not obliterate from his memory.

"Behold! (cried he, throwing himſelf by her ſide) behold thy Edward—live, O my beloved, to realiſe his half reviving hopes—ah, by what miracle art thou here to bleſs my grief-worn eyes?—my Ethelinde—my ſoul's dear treaſure."

A ſudden

A ſudden flaſh of tranſport glowed for a moment on her cheek, but ſoon it was ſucceeded by deathly paleneſs — ſhe threw her feeble arms around him, and replied,

" I ſee, my Edward, that heaven rejects the oblation which is made at the expence of relative and moral duty. On thee my virgin heart had fixed its pureſt and prime affections; to thee my ſacred faith was pledged; vainly then did I conclude, that a violation of the laws of nature could conſtitute acceptable devotion; the miſt which hovered long before my

my eyes, is at length withdrawn, and I perceive, too late, that to act well the ſocial part, is true religion; compared to which, faſts, penances and pilgrimages, are futile offerings, which reach not the portals of the ſkies."

De Courcy was not yet ſo dead to earthly joy, as to be able to hear ſuch a confeſſion from the lips of Ethelinde, without feeling a tranſport of ineffable delight, and he hailed, in ardent language, the bright view of connubial bliſs, which gleamed on his ſoul.

"It

"It is too late; (reſumed Ethelinde) already I feel the hand of death; nor is it meet, that the happineſs I capriciouſly rejected, ſhould woo my choice thus late; yet while a few moments are allowed me, let me do juſtice to thy conſtancy, thy worth, by owning, that in my miſtake I met my puniſhment. Applauded by the ſacred ſiſterhood, a kind of ſpiritual pride poſſeſſed my ſoul, and prompted me to think, even paradiſe too mean a boon, for the value of my ſacrifice. But as though my vows were an affront to heaven, from the hour I took the ſacred veil, miſery became my own.

own. Ah, where were now the celeſtial joys with which I had deceived my fond expectation—thy loved idea—thy tenderneſs, thy truth—thy wrongs haunted my lonely hours—I ſought the phantom which had allured me, but found it not. At length it was diſcovered, that ſome eſtates in Ireland had devolved to me, by the death of a relation. It was determined by the ſuperior, that I ſhould take poſſeſſion of the property, for the benefit of the convent, and for this purpoſe a diſpenſation paſſed the court of Rome—but the tempeſt which blaſted that deſign, has reſtored to me

me the only treaſure I eſteem on earth. I die in thy arms, my deareſt Edward, and am bleſt."

Here her voice failed—the film of death cloſed over the viſual orbs—ſhe caſt on De Courcy a look of love, and expired on his throbbing breaſt.

The faithful lover ſurvived this event but a few months, and according to his own deſire, was buried in the ſame grave with his beloved Ethelinde. The white ſtone which covered their remains, was long extant with this inſcription.

*Whom*

*Whom love unites, death cannot divide.*

The youths and virgins often aſſembled at the hallowed ſpot, to mourn the ſtory of their hapleſs loves, and catch the enkindling ſpirit of truth and virtue—and long the memory of the hermit was preſerved with ſacred reverence by the inhabitants of the Iſle of Mona.

FINIS.